

*A conceptual model for student-athlete's choice of institution based on recruiting tactics utilized by Division I men's basketball and football coaches*

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Division I men's basketball and football programs need to justify expenses associated with recruiting practices to show they understand and seek to improve the environment that surrounds student-athletes during the choice process. The process of selecting an institution to attend appears complex because it includes a variety of influencers like academic major, geographical location and social atmosphere (Wirt, 1999). Student-athletes enjoy the added pressure of also considering several different athletic factors and pressures before making their decision. As desirable commodities, we may not appreciate their difficulty to make the right decision or the consequences of ill-informed choice. Establishing a good match between school environment and student produces positive effects on their personal development and provides them with numerous social benefits, which leads to enhanced performance and greater satisfaction (Litten, 1982). Importantly, Riemer and Chelladurai (1998) proposed the success of any intercollegiate athletic department should be, at least to some degree, based on the satisfaction and connection to its student-athletes.

In recent years, the recruiting process generated some important scholarly attention but few investigations addressed the decision-making process of prospective student-athletes. Most inquiries revealed only the multiple factors, which influence the choice process of student-athletes (Bouldin, Stahura, & Greenwood, 2004; Davis, 2006; Gabert, Hale, & Montalvo, 1999; Klenosky, Templin, & Troutman, 2001; Walker, 2002). This presentation offers a conceptual model on the student-athlete decision-making process through examining the recruiting strategies practiced by coaches in both Division I football and basketball. The Brand Elimination Process (BEP) developed by Naryana and Markin in 1975 serves as the foundation for this model. Additional research from higher education, marketing science, economic psychology, and behavioral economics also supported the creation of this proposed model. The investigator analyzed a variety of information through a comprehensive content analysis from a purposive sample of 30 men's basketball and 15 football programs. Specifically, the researcher collected recruiting philosophies, strategic plans, and various types of paperwork associated with recruiting from personal contacts to design/expand the BEP model.

The model proposes student-athletes, with a predisposition to attend college and actively recruited by schools, try to reduce a large numbers of possibilities into smaller numbers before making a decision. The recruiting tactics show student-athletes reduce their field by assigning schools placement into one of three consideration sets (evoked-positive, inert-neutral, inept-negative). From the evoked set, they create a choice set and rank institutions before making their decision. Following the selection of the top rated school, student-athletes examine the perceived rewards and determine their level of satisfaction. It is proposed dissatisfaction can lead to discontinuance or a search for a new institution to attend.